

# A SALUTE TO NURSING

*As we celebrate Nursing Week, we reflect on changes in the profession and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead*

## CARE AND COMPASSION

Margie Mackie is co-ordinator of The Bridge Program, a day program in the adult mental health system at Markham Stouffville Hospital.

The hospital has a 25-bed mental health facility with a schedule 1 designation, which means the hospital cares for people who may be of immediate danger to themselves.

Mackie said she is constantly challenged by her work with people who face a complex and difficult struggle to make decisions for themselves and meet their own needs.

"They need to find a certain harmony in their life and a challenge for me as a nurse is to also seek that in my own life and try and find that balance," she said.

Mackie was also one of three members of the Mental Health System, which included director Cindi Draper and patient care co-ordinator Susan Clarke, who travelled to Westminster, England, last year to attend the International Council of Nursing conference.

At the conference, Mackie and the mental health team presented the hospital's philosophy of providing care to patients.

"They wanted to look at innovative practices and ours was to make every patient's experience a great one and to empower the patient which is key in mental health. We look at finding the strength in people and moving forward," said Mackie. "Our theory is human caring and compassion is key to developing a relationship with patients."



## OPERATING ONLINE

Technology is fast becoming a large part of every workplace and that does not exclude nursing.

At Markham Stouffville Hospital, RoseAnn Pacheco is involved in the implementation of the hospital's online system.

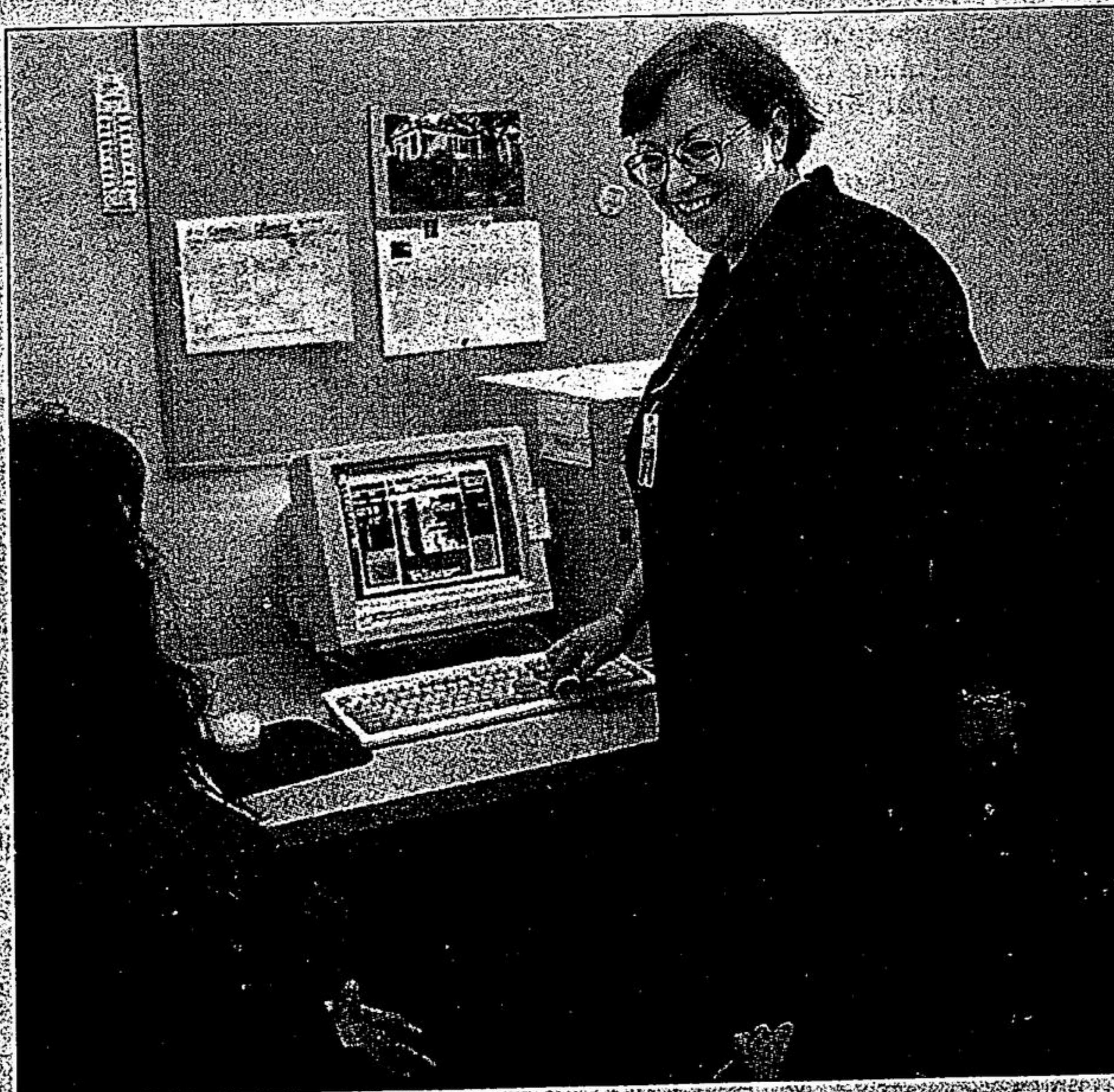
"It's definitely a door that is opening wider and wider," said Pacheco who is responsible for training all staff on the online documentation program. "It's a field that has really exploded finally in the Canadian health-care system."

Pacheco has been at Markham Stouffville six months, having recently arrived from the Hospital For Sick Children where she was clinical systems analyst for seven years.

And while RNs like Pacheco who are trained in the technology side of medicine are rare, she says nursing schools are now getting on board — York University now offers a health information program.

Nurses are key in the use of computerized hospital information says Pacheco, because they have the clinical background necessary for understanding what is involved.

"Nurses really understand what is required when someone says they need to book a patient for the OR," she said.



## SATISFACTION

Since Markham Stouffville Hospital opened 10 years ago, RN Barb Bitter has been an important part of the palliative and complex care unit.

The patients Bitter sees each day cannot be admitted to a nursing home because they require around the clock nursing care.

With 24 patients in the unit, Bitter and her colleagues face many challenges in a field where patients are becoming more acutely ill.

But despite the stresses she encounters, Bitter says her work gives her satisfaction every day.

"When I come in and see patients who have very complex issues, who are in pain or need our help and then at the end of the day they are more comfortable, I feel I have done my job — it's very satisfying. You realize that it could be your family member," Bitter said.

"And often there are family issues to deal with so it is a real learning experience."

For Bitter, strength during a stressful day often comes from her fellow colleagues.

"The nurses who work here are like family — we support one another and we have the support of the social workers and medical professionals — it's a very interdisciplinary team."

Bitter has been an RN since 1971 and originally trained as a midwife.

Stories by Jennifer Brown ~ Photos by Sjoerd Witteveen

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